



Global Voices Information Sheet

Why we're all confused about climate change



Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore presenting *An Inconvenient Truth*

Background Info

- In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. Part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto is an international treaty.
- UN member countries have agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below the benchmark year level, which is a goal of about 5% reduction from 1990 carbon levels. The protocol was named after the location of the convention, which took place in Kyoto, Japan. Kyoto entered into force in 2005.
- The Kyoto Protocol is set to expire in 2012.
- From Nov 28 to Dec 9, 2011, world leaders gathered in Durban, South Africa, for the UN climate change conference, in part to discuss how to proceed once Kyoto expires.
- Canada has not met its reduction targets for Kyoto, and it plans to withdraw before it expires in 2012.
- Climate change is complex and sometimes contentious. Research cited in the article suggests that the complexity and urgency of the situation might lead people to avoid information about the problem.
- One unfortunate consequence is that the motivation for individual action might be suppressed, since people are more likely to ignore important issues and rely on governments.

Key terms

- **Climate change**—a significant, statistical change in temperature, measured over long periods of time—thousands or even millions of years. Climate change can be regional or global.
- **Global warming**—the gradual increase in the average temperature of Earth's atmosphere. There is large consensus as to the cause of global warming, namely, the greenhouse gas effect, or the erosion of the ozone due to carbon emissions, otherwise referred to as “man-made” climate change. However, there are some people who disagree with this theory.
- **Peak oil**—the point in time when maximum global petroleum extraction has been reached, which would lead to an oil shortage.
- **Subprime mortgage**—loans targeted at people who normally would not qualify for loans due to poor credit. Interest payments are very low for the first few years, but then sharply increase. Subprime mortgage lending was a significant contributing factor to the 2008 global recession.

Global Voices Secondary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: climate change, global warming, the Kyoto Protocol, consumption, waste, lifestyle, ecological footprint.
- Course Connections: Business Studies, Canadian and World Studies, English, Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers and internet
- Global Voices column

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Reading Comprehension

1. Reading Comprehension: Global Voices Column (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Pre reading steps:
 - i. Introduce the topic and encourage students to discuss what they already know about the topic, making predictions around what the column is about.
 - b. Reading steps:
 - i. Read: students must read the text independently, highlighting important points throughout the column.
 - ii. Ask: students must ask themselves what the story is about, recording five questions they are unsure of after reading the column.

- iii. Paraphrase: students must write point form notes in their own words around what the column is about.
- c. Post reading discussion:
 - i. What are the main points of the column?
 - ii. What emotions did this column evoke in you?
 - iii. What problem is identified in the column?
 - iv. What questions do you have about the column?

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Discussing the Global Voices Column (estimated time: 10 minutes)
 - a. Ask students the following suggested questions about the column, encourage them to use evidence from the Global Voices column to support their answers:
 - i. What is the message in this column?
 - ii. What perspectives are presented in this column? Which ones are left out?
 - iii. What problem is presented in this column?
 - iv. What is climate change?
 - v. Who is responsible for taking action against climate change?
 - vi. What are the dangers of climate change?
 - vii. What is causing climate change?
 - viii. What is fossil fuel?
 - ix. What are CO2 emissions?

Thinking

1. Ecological Footprint (estimated time: individual assignment and 20 minutes of class time)
 - a. Ask students to calculate their ecological footprint either at home or in the classroom on a computer. Students must record their final results.
 - b. Ask students to visit <http://www.myfootprint.org/> to take their quiz.
 - c. Once all students in the class have had a chance to calculate their ecological footprint, bring the class together for a discussion.
 - d. Divide the class into small groups and encourage them to discuss the following suggested questions:
 - i. If everyone on the planet lived your lifestyle, how many earths would we need?
 - ii. What did your footprint look like in global hectares by consumption? How did it compare to the country average?
 - iii. What did your footprint share look like by biome? What were your forestland, cropland, pastureland and marine fisheries footprints?
 - iv. What were the suggested ways you could reduce your footprint?
 - v. What will the consequences be if you continue to live the way you do?
 - e. When these discussions are complete, bring the class back together and discuss students results and findings. Ask the class to compare how their results compared to those of their classmates.
 - f. Together, create a list of things students plan to do to decrease their ecological footprint.
 - g. Retake the quiz in a month to see if their footprint has decreased.

Communication

1. Debate Rotation on Climate Change (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. In the Global Voices column, it states: "Collectively, we couldn't agree on whether climate change was a man-made problem."
 - b. Divide the class into groups of four.
 - c. Instruct two members of the group to argue for the above statement, and the remaining two members to argue against the above statement.

- d. Allow students 10 – 15 minutes to gather their thoughts and research on the topic, then signal the debates to begin.
- e. Allow groups to debate for 5 minutes, then instruct groups to rotate. Partners who had been arguing “pro” in one group, will now move to another set of partners and argue “against”.
- f. Allow these rotations to happen a few times.
- g. By the end of this activity, students will have argued all sides of the debate and they will have heard a variety of opinions on the subject.
- h. Bring the class back together for a discussion on the above statement.

Application

1. Kyoto Protocol (estimated time: take home project)
 - a. Canada and the Kyoto Protocol have been in the news lately. Ask students to explain what they know about this topic, offering what they know about the Kyoto Protocol.
 - b. Ask students to perform individual research and find out all they can on the Kyoto Protocol. Collecting pictures, news articles and opinions ask students to develop a report on the protocol. Students will define the terms of the protocol, list the countries involved, explain the progress made thus far and describe Canada’s previous commitment to the protocol and their reasons for pulling out.
 - c. Completed reports will be handed in for grading.

Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children – www.freethechildren.com

We Day Teach - <http://www.weday.com/teach>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php